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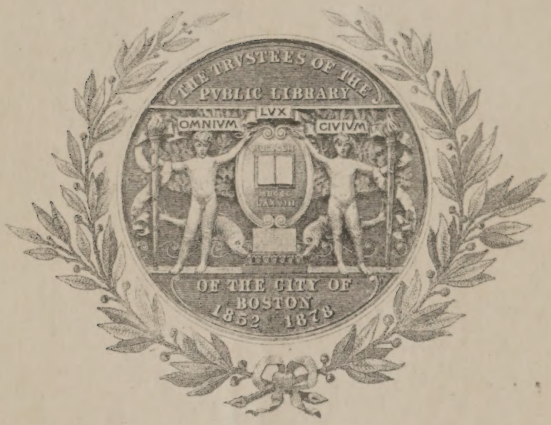
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Edward Everett

The Strength and Beauty of the Sanctuary.

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SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

DEDICATION

OF THE 7551.407

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

IN

NATICK, MASSACHUSETTS.

NOVEMBER 15, 1854.

BY REV. ELIAS NASON,

Pastor of the Church.

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SERMON.

PSALM XCVI. 6.

STRENGTH AND BEAUTY ARE IN HIS SANCTUARY.

ON all the nobler forms of this material universe, its illustrious Architect has impressed the elements of strength and beauty; and through their harmonious interblending, mainly, has awakened in our minds the idea of perfection. It is not strength alone, nor beauty alone; but strength AND beauty—the combination of the two in one—that constitutes the complete, enduring, and perfect whole.

It is not in the mighty heaving of the ocean's bosom merely; nor yet in the light and feathery foam that mantles it; but rather in the masterly commingling of the strength and beauty, that we perceive the secret of its perfection. So, too, the glory of the sun above us, lies neither in the potent energy of its fertilizing beam, nor yet in the streaming radiance of its molten orb; but in the fact that power and splendor meet, and clasp each other in that globe of fire, and throw their wedded influence in lavish kindness over all the earth.

We call, too, that vast and complicated system of physical law, which God has stamped upon this world of matter, PERFECT; not merely because we find it strong and permanent; but because, in its various adaptations to the magnificent, as well as to the minute; to the rolling planet, as to the glistening tear-drop; we also find it very beautiful,

It is thus, also, in the highest forms of art, wherein the lofty thoughts of genius are enshrined for immortality. The chief elements of their perfection, are strength and beauty; strength and beauty interwoven into one artistic, elaborate and enduring whole.

In the marble dome that crowns the Acropolis; in the stately ship that flings its pennon to the breeze; in the lofty arch that spans the foaming cataract; in the towering shaft that marks the spot where heroes fell,—we have not beauty alone, nor strength alone; but beauty in the arms of strength, and strength irradiated by the smile of beauty.

You will notice, too, that in those glorious acts of moral heroism, which have gained the admiration of mankind—as when the prophet Nathan said unto his guilty king, "Thou art the man;" as when a greater than that prophet said, "Father, forgive them"—strength and beauty meet together, and appear in union;—strength in the dauntless resolution of the soul, and beauty in the light and love investing it.

In whatever we call PERFECT, these elements co-exist, and are both essential to it; for if we conceive the strength to be removed, the beauty vanishes; or if we strike away the beauty—always including that of adaptation and design—the strength is thereby rendered unavailable.

If, then, this union of strength and beauty be, as it were, the LAW OF PERFECTION, both as it regards the works of God and man; and if the worship of the "lofty one that inhabiteth eternity" be, as men of every age and clime have felt and said, the highest exercise of which the soul is capable, we shall at once expect to see the combination of these elements exhibited in their fullness, in the holy temple where "his honor dwelleth." Or, in other words, the analogy of the higher forms and developments in the material, intellectual and moral world, which we consider PERFECT, teach us to expect the combination of those elements essential to perfection in the habitation of the living God on

earth; and these, our text informs us, do in reality co-exist there. "Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." But where, my brethren, shall we look for them?

We have come here, to-day, to consecrate this temple to the Lord. It is a noble structure. We seem to see in it the bands of strength and beauty. In its strong foundation stones; its massive beams and timbers, interlocked and bound with iron bolts; in its compact walls, its double roof, and its well-jointed spire, we have the element of strength; while in its grained ceiling, its pendents and its traceries; in its commodious pews; its pulpit; in its deep-toned organ, and its soft and mellow light; in the unity of its design, and in the tastefulness of its decorations, we have the element of beauty, reposing, as it were, upon the arm of her twin brother, strength, and illumining him with her radiant smile.

But is this the stability and grace to which my text refers? A conflagration or a tempest might arise, and in a moment overwhelm this towering edifice, and sweep this outward splendor all away, and leave but smouldering ruins on the consecrated spot! The real perfection of God's house consists, I think, in something far less frail and perishable than this material fabric, or the decorations which embellish it. In what, then, does it lie?

This sanctuary is intended for the public service of the Lord; and in the form and order of this service, we seem again to behold the union of these elements of which I speak; for who can listen to the sweet chiming of the Sabbath bells, and behold the convocation of the people—the aged sire, with reverend head, filled with the experience of a life-time; the prattling child, with hope's radiant bow before it; youth, in the opening bloom of existence; manhood, with majestic tread and heart of resolution;—who can behold the vast assembly of the people, drawn from their varied homes and habitations as one common brotherhood to the holy temple, mingling their hearts and souls in one com-

mon act of adoration; who can behold, I say, the great assembly bowed as ONE within the sacred fane in worship of the Eternal King of Heaven, and not confess that strength and beauty blend together, sweetly and harmoniously, in the solemn scene!

And when the "herald of the cross" unfolds the secret springs of action in the heart,—unvails his Master's glory as beheld in his resplendent works, or word, or person; and moves and sways, as with the wand of the enchanter, the assembled multitude to tears of weeping or of exultation; when his soul is roused and set on fire and rendered luminous by some great thought; when his eye glistens, his brow speaks, and his lip sparkles with the light of eloquence and poetry and pathos,—this messenger becomes, as it were, the very embodiment of strength and beauty.

The swelling notes of the majestic organ, too,

"In linked sweetness long drawn out,"

together with the rich and melodious voices of the choir, the slow and manly bass and tenor, combining with the soft and silvery alto, and the clear and golden treble, blending and intermingling and modulating through all

"The hidden links of heavenly harmony,"

seem to pour forth continually upon the ear, and breathe into the very soul itself, the sentiment from the Song of David—"Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary."

But it is not in the number of the congregation, though it were vast as that which stood in front of Sinai; nor in the union of their hearts, though but one burning thought pervade and bind them; neither is it in the eloquence of the preacher, nor yet in the soul-inspiring music, though charming as the songs that broke upon the stillness of creation, that we find that real efficiency and honor which is the true and peculiar GLORY of the house of God.

Though lovely as the bride, adorned to meet her bride-

groom, the outward service of the temple of the Lord may be but of the lip or eye, and, therefore, but an offence and mockery in the sight of "him with whom we have to do." It may be even as in the majestic temple of King Solomon, when the frown of God was overshadowing it, and he said, "They sit before me as my people, and they hear my words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear my words, but they do them not."

But we seem again to see the union of these elements of perfection in those great and glorious "doctrines of the cross," which are to be published here. We seem to behold them in that soul-ennobling truth, that the personal and the all-seeing God is the rightful SOVEREIGN of this illimitable universe, working his own pleasure among the nations, and turning the hearts of men, even as the potter turns the plastic clay, to form the vessel in his hands. We seem to have a glimpse of them in that sublime doctrine of election, which ascribes the sole glory of our salvation unto Him who chose us in his Son; and also in that other grand central truth of Christianity, that by the shedding of that Son's blood, through faith in his name, we have redemption and the pardon of our sin.

In the harmony, too, of these doctrines with each other; in their combination into one complete and perfect system; in their adaptation to the wants and woes of men; in their reflection of the wisdom and goodness of God, we also seem to behold strength and beauty blending, even as in the magnificent arrangement of those orbs of fire that glow by night upon the brow of heaven.

But yet, majestic as these doctrines are, the peculiar glory of God's sanctuary is not here. These doctrines do, and may still prove, but as "the savor of death unto death;" and though an angel's tongue proclaim them, may nevertheless

be unto "the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness."

But if the intrinsic glory of the sanctuary consist not in the solidity and decorations of the house itself, nor in the order of its service; nor yet in those great doctrines which are taught therein—what is it, and whither shall we turn for it?

There ever liveth, high and far above us in the heavens, a Spirit of eternal power and beauty, which in mercy comes to unfold its glory on the spot where men are met to worship God! It is the Spirit which hovered over the winged cherubim of the tabernacle of the wilderness; which shone upon the altar, after the dedication of the temple by King Solomon; which descended as a mystic dove upon the holy Jesus, on the banks of Jordan; which fell, "as cloven tongues, like as of fire," upon the heads of his disciples; which shone around the apostle Paul, "above the brightness of the sun;" which is present in the congregation of the righteous every where; which has touched with its assuasive, purifying influence, every Christian bosom; which is moving in its silent might, if I mistake not, in these courts to-day! It is the Holy Spirit of the Lord, in whom are all the springs and issues of perfection; it is the SHEKINAH of the ancient dispensation—the blessed COMFORTER of the new—which constitutes the real, and the only real stability and ornament of the habitation of the Lord!

This is that "Power from on high," that "EVERLASTING STRENGTH," that "PERFECTION OF BEAUTY"—strength of strength, and beauty of beauty, in eternal union blended, perfect and complete—which is to form the real GLORY of this consecrated place. This is the mighty AGENT which breathes the living soul, the holy fire of devotion, into the whole body of our temple worship, quickening and enkindling, sanctifying and beautifying it. This is that golden oil that sheds its sweet aroma through the hallowed fane, and pours the holy baptism on the souls whom God hath chosen.

I have said, that the perfection of God's house does not consist in the great doctrines of the cross proclaimed therein. Of themselves alone, they are but as yon silent organ, ere the pealing strains of music are poured through its hollow tubes. But let the Holy Ghost descend into the temple, set home, and fix and seal those doctrines on the heart, and they become at once all radiant with the light of heaven, and seem to be imbedded on the rock of strength, and crowned with lustrous beauty. They become "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds," and "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Have you not seen the sinner fret and rave against these doctrines of the cross of Jesus; and yet, subdued beneath the breathings of the Holy Ghost within the sanctuary, have you not also seen him grasping these same doctrines with inexpressible delight, and anchoring on them his expectations for eternity!

Made efficient by the power of the Holy Spirit, these great doctrines, in the hands of such as Paul and Calvin, Edwards, Baxter, and the like, have stood as an impregnable rampart of truth, beating back the waves of folly which have madly dashed, for almost twenty centuries, against its solid buttresses; and have formed for the "chosen ones" a dear abode of love and joy and undisturbed repose within. And though the angry surge still swells and breaks with all its force, the rampart still reposes in majestic grandeur—strength and beauty—not one line effaced, inscribed upon its towering front.

The imposing service of the temple, too, which in itself alone is but as the writing on the wall, without the voice of an interpreter, becomes, beneath the hallowed influence of the Holy Ghost, instinct with life, and power, and beauty, and significance. Not in the sermon, nor the supplication, nor the song, most eloquent and moving and melodious though they be; but in the Spirit streaming through them, lies their strength, and excellence, and efficiency.

You can well remember, brethren, precious seasons, when God's Spirit seemed to hover over and to fill the chosen place of his abode; when every soul was glowing with a holy fervor, and was bending low before the Majesty on high; when every heart-string was attuned in unison, and was tremblingly alive all over to the exquisite touch of the finger of Divinity thereon. In such a heavenly, pentecostal season, the whole service of the house has become a new and living thing of power to you. The old familiar words of this dear book have caught a moving and sublime significance; the solemn prayer becomes, to you, an allocution with Jehovah, just as if he stood in awful majesty all visible before you; the speaker's words come like the points of diamonds, fixing truth into your heart and making every fibre of it thrill and pant for holiness; the songs of Zion swell upon your ear like bursts of music breaking from the chorus of the Seraphim that sweep their quivering strings before the throne of the Eternal. Faith rolls away the vail that hangs before you and your home of glory; and Hope lifts up your soul, upon exulting pinion, to fix her blest abode in it. In such precious seasons, there is power and splendor in the services of the sanctuary; in every word, in every tone, in every tear, in every aspiration; but it is the power of the Comforter; it is the "beauty of holiness" which that blessed person of the Godhead doth combine with power.

The temple, too, beneath the breathings of the Holy One, becomes a place of strength and beauty. It matters little where the humble Christian bends to worship God; whether in an "upper chamber" at Jerusalem, or beneath the fretted vault and gilded dome of the basilicon; whether with the ancient Cameronian, in the hidden caverns of the Scottish mountains, or within the guarded tent upon the battle-field; whether on the ship's deck, beaten by the billow, or beneath the over-arching forest bough, through

"—— whose leafy shade the sunbeam sweet is stealing,"

or in this noble sanctuary, which we consecrate to God this

day. If the Spirit of the Lord be there, the spot is full of majesty and honor! If this be wanting, even the majestic temple of King Solomon is but the vain memorial of human pride and folly; while the cave of Carmel, hallowed by this Spirit, comes to be the resplendent vestibule of heaven itself. Let God but make this temple his abode; let him but move the hearts of sinners here to seek the great salvation, and satisfy the poor with bread from off his holy altar; let God but make this house we build for him, as that where David knelt, his own peculiar dwelling, and every beam in it shall be girt with Strength, every pillar in it shout forth, Beauty!

The perfection of the sanctuary, then, consists not in the material form, or intellectual formula, or the vocal utterance thereof; but in the living, sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost, as manifested through these outward means and instruments. This power is not limited to any spot or place. "Behold," cries Solomon, "the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded." And yet the Spirit of God does condescend to visit, in a very special manner, habitations set apart exclusively to honor and to magnify his name; and when he deigns to enter them, and not till then, there comes into them the full perfection of glory; there comes in ONE whose omnipotent arm built up the fabric of this material universe, and flung across the new-born world a robe of azure light; there comes in ONE who laid the beams of the chambers of the morning,—

> "Unrolled the golden map of heaven,
> Mantled with beauty all the land,—
> Gave light to morn and shade to even.
>
> "A God whose all-prevailing might
> The laws of countless worlds disposes,
> Yet gives the sparkling dews their light,
> Their beauty to the blushing roses."

There comes in ONE who laid the pillars of the LAW in strength, and crowned it with the beauty of the GOSPEL.

There comes in ONE mighty to bend and break the stubborn will of sinful man; to change the vulture to the dove; the rough and stormy night of passion, to the golden morning of a calm and lovely day!

Efficiency and Beauty in himself, the Holy Spirit imparts the same to every other spirit rendered willing to receive it. In every place, but mainly in the sanctuary,—in many ways,—but mostly through the agency of truth; this blessed Power acts directly and immediately on the soul, convincing and convicting it of sin, implanting the germs of a new life within it, and moving it, as the breeze the bark upon the sea, gently to bend before its influence and bear away with steady course to greet the gleaming hill-tops of a lovelier and a holier clime.

Whatever human soul this sacred Spirit deigns to choose for his abode, that soul is thereby rendered very strong and beautiful. I care not who or where it be; whether an infant sleeping amid the rushes on the margin of the Nile, or a poetic shepherd boy on the green hill-sides of Judea; whether an unlettered fisherman by the sea of Galilee, or an enthusiastic student at the feet of a Gamaliel; whether a slender invalid of Geneva, or a traveling tinker of Bedfordshire; whether a countess at her mansion-house in Spafield, or a Deacon Tamo on the mountains of Nestoria, or a blind old man, (a miracle of grace,) that lifts his sightless orbs to God this day among us here in Natick; if the Spirit of the living God abide in him, then I say, that man is full of real and efficient power.

Lowly and unpolished and unheeded though he be, that man is full of power! In his very weakness, he is imbued with strength; strength to breast the wave of temptation; strength to apply the word of God to practice; strength to make reform, beginning at the centre with himself; strength to reconstruct society upon a solid base; strength to let his light shine out amid the darkness; strength to love his fel-

low man, whatever creed he advocate, whatever skin he wear; STRENGTH TO LOVE GOD!

The world, I know, call those men strong who summon mighty squadrons to the battle-field; or pile their golden treasures to the sky; or command the "applause of listening senates" by their eloquence. The world mistake the shadow for the substance. That holy Peter, sleeping in his iron chains within a dungeon's gloom, was mightier than the imperial Cæsar, mis-called "master of mankind;" that lonely widow, casting her single mite into the treasury of the Lord, was stronger than the moneyed aristocracy of Jerusalem; the tear of that poor Cambrian girl, that called the British Bible Society into being, will speak most eloquent when the name of William Pitt has passed into oblivion.

Whatever be his outward lot, the man moved by the Spirit of the Lord is strong; and it is past the power of man, or devil, to deprive him of his strength. You may wrong him, vilify him, curse him; you may set the iron heel of despotism on his head; you may bind and beat and burn him, but you cannot break him down; you might as well attempt to break down that strong arm on which he leans, and from which he derives his strength.

And such a man is also very beautiful. He stoops to pluck the flowers of sweet humility; he condescends to men of low estate, and that is beautiful; he speaks the truth, and that is beautiful; he acts the truth, and that is still more beautiful; he loves the brotherhood, he loves his enemy, and that is beautiful. He throws the light of sunny smiles and loving words around him as he climbs his way towards heaven's gate; he rises joyfully above the murky atmosphere of greed and selfishness, even as the sky-lark, singing, mounts aloft and soars on pinions glittering in the beams of morning. In lowly cot, or lordly hall, his life, unfolding by the Spirit's influence into harmony and love, becomes a "golden psalm of praise" to God; and that is very beautiful.

This world, I know, is full of beauty; you behold it in the

flower that smiles beneath your feet; in the bird that flits across your pathway; in the enchanting hues of the autumnal foliage; in the radiance of the golden-fringed clouds that form the sun's pavilion in the west; in the heaven-dyed rainbow; in the moon's pale crescent; in the stars that glitter on the bosom of the night;—you behold it sparkling amid the fissures of the flinty rock down in the dark chambers of the globe; and even on the coral floor of ocean, where, amid gems and pearls, the bones of those we love lie whitening. You behold it in the marble and the canvas which the touch of genius brings almost to breathe and speak before you; you perceive it in the conceptions of the bard, in the artistic combinations of the composer; but beautiful as these things are, beautiful as these things were, if all blended into one blaze of beauty, still, far above them all in beauty is that man with whom God's Spirit deigns to dwell on earth, and who, above the lure of gain or fame, above the sordid tricks of trade, above the ignoble doctrine of expediency, above the cringing thought that he must do as other men, above "the fashion of this world," moves bravely onward through the field of duty where God's finger points—that is to glory!

Such a man is beautiful; and though a beggar at the gate of Dives, he is very beautiful. Of all things on this globe, he is the most beautiful. He is a diadem of beauty which is to shine with splendor, even in a clime where all is beauty. He is a strong man also. Strength and beauty meet in him, and combining, give him something of the perfection of the Master who has chosen him to reveal his excellence.

Such men form the real strength and beauty of this nation; such men are the "salt" that save the body politic from corruption; such men are God's chosen agents in the work of human civilization and of social progress; such men are the promulgators of the secrets of the Godhead, and the real defenders of learning and of liberty; such men broke down the heathen fanes of Greece and Rome; such men raised the altar of freedom in Old England; such men laid

the beams of our own national greatness; such men sustain them now; such men are breaking down the walls of modern Babylon, and opening the well of truth for all the people; such men are bearing the banner of the cross, with all the blessings of Christianity in its train, to the realms of pagan degradation; such men are still to uphold that banner till it float in triumph over all this earth. SUCH MEN CONSTITUTE THE CHURCH OF CHRIST BELOW; which, fed and nurtured by the Holy Spirit in the sanctuary, becomes the light and glory of the world; and which, with all its imperfections, still reflects the splendor and the power of its illustrious Head and Leader and Defender; which still, across the track of revolutions, and of rising or of falling empires, holds on its steady and triumphant way; and which, in spite of "all the fiery darts of the wicked," still "LOOKETH FORTH AS THE MORNING, FAIR AS THE MOON, CLEAR AS THE SUN, AND TERRIBLE AS AN ARMY WITH BANNERS." Her history, it is true, is steeped in tears and blood! The infidel has smitten her on the right cheek, and the apostate on the left; the atheist has belched forth his mockeries against her holy faith; the pantheist his denunciations; the witling has abused her with sarcasm; the worldling with gibes and taunts and ribaldry. Kings and princes have combined their power to over-master her; warriors have stained her robes with crimson; and mitred heads have striven to crush the life from out her bosom;—but still, amid the din of arms, the leagued oppression and the conflict of opinion, the church has found time, from age to age,

"In mossy cave, or woodland wild,"

to meet her God upon the Sabbath, and sit with Jesus at the sacramental board; and there, baptized anew, and strengthened for the warfare, she has come forth elastic from the heel of the oppressor, rejoicing to fulfill her glorious mission. Though resisted and reviled at every step, she has yet moved forward, ever first and foremost in all real progress, both in science and philanthropy; now giving to the

world a Guttenburg, now a Columbus, now a Calvin, now a Luther, now a Newton, now a Wilberforce, and now a Washington!—stooping to the lowliest, counseling the loftiest, throwing the light of noble deeds around her; blessing those that have cursed her, and praying for those that have despitefully used and persecuted her.

And does any one expect to see the church of God go down? her glory fade away? Does any unbeliever, in his sober senses, look for this? Does any one here suppose that such an institution will be broken up, and some poor "ism" of some poor driveling dreamer take the place of it? I tell you nay! for ever since the baptism fell on her first member, have new schemes and systems been devised to take her place; but lacking strength and beauty, they have disappeared before her as the clouds before the morning sun, and so must ever do. Her path, from Calvary until now, is whitened by the bones of her calumniators who, with lying lips, proclaimed her speedy dissolution. They soon died; but she went on rejoicing. And thus will those, who set their feet against her now, soon die; but she will still march forward, working out her grand achievements for the human family;—and thus may others come and lay their bloody hands upon her; but they will die; yet she will still march forward, in the strength and beauty of the Holy Ghost, until, every foe subdued, she stands, with all her beauteous garments on, before her King in glory.

Break down the church of God! Ah! that man who tries it, little knows what and whom he is dealing with. Break down the rock-ribbed mountains, certainly he may; but ere he can destroy the church, he must break down that Arm which, by its strength, setteth fast the mountains and upholdeth her. He must break down that power that stands behind her, and on whose bosom she reposes.

"The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay;
Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away;
But fixed his word, his saving power remains,—
Thy realm forever lasts, thy own Messiah reigns."

Things are not always, friends and brethren, as they seem to be. What men call weakness and deformity, is oftentimes the very citadel of power and splendor. There was once on earth "a root out of dry ground," that had 'no form or comeliness or beauty.' A babe was born at Bethlehem, in a manger; there seemed to be no strength or beauty in it. That babe became a

"Poor, way-faring man of grief."

There seemed to be no strength or beauty in him. He visited the lowly cot; he clasped the rugged hand of toil; he stooped to wipe the tear from misery's cheek; he bathed the feet of humble fishermen; he agonized in prayer for man, till drops of blood fell from his brow; the world could see no strength or beauty in such lowliness and suffering. He was arrested by his enemies, tried and convicted, and condemned to death. He was mocked, reviled and buffeted, and scourged and led away to crucifixion. His limbs were fastened to the cross; a Roman soldier's spear was struck into his breast; and in his mortal agony he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Abandoned by his bosom friends, crushed by his foes, forsaken of his God, and borne to the silent tomb, what power or grace can we behold in him? The lowliest peasant in Jerusalem seemed to have more than he.

But see! the bands of death are riven; the portals of the tomb unfold, and Jesus Christ comes forth therefrom, triumphant over sin and hell, with strength and beauty gleaming on his majestic brow. The great atonement being made in blood, the "everlasting doors" receive the King of glory to the resplendent palace of his God, from which he sends, according to his word, that Comforter which is to be the strength and beauty of his people here. With blood Christ sealed the everlasting covenant; with blood he bought his church; he sent the Holy Ghost to purify it; he intercedes in heaven for its deliverance from every peril; he leads it in

the paths of righteousness for his name's sake; and he thus ensures for it triumphant victory.

But do you ask me for the origin of this vast transaction which the Son and Holy Spirit perform in the redemption, the regeneration, and the sanctification of the church? Then I must point you to the eternal spring of strength and beauty; to the LOVE unfathomable and inexhaustible in the bosom of the Father. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." From that inexhaustible tide of love abounding in the Godhead, which ordained the saints unto eternal life, and sent the Son to die for them, the Holy Spirit to renew them, comes that strength and beauty which is the peculiar glory of the sanctuary, and which is imparted through it mainly to the church and to the world!

Encircled by the arms of God—his banner of love all gleaming with the promises thrown over her—her redemption wrought by Jesus, and her Comforter imparting potency and grace to her in the sanctuary—she may smile at every shock that hell can bring against her, and, with brightening eye, pass on to glory; her triumphant acclamation rolling and spreading and deepening as she goes, till all the sons of earth join in the swelling chorus—

> "Hallelujah! for the Lord
> God omnipotent shall reign:
> Hallelujah! let the word
> Echo round the earth and main!"

To that eternal and all-glorious God of love; to that only begotten Son, the Mediator and Redeemer; to the Holy Ghost, the Comforter and Sanctifier; to the adorable and ever-blessed Trinity, the only wise God—WE DEDICATE THIS HOUSE; to Him we dedicate this PULPIT; to Him we dedicate this ORGAN; to Him we dedicate these WALLS; to Him we dedicate this VESTRY; to Him we dedicate these SEATS;

to Him we dedicate OURSELVES, to be forever his, and sacred to his service!

"Arise, O God, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints shout for joy."

My friends and brethren, I congratulate you on the erection of this temple of God. It stands on consecrated ground, where God in days gone by has shown his glory; and I implore him now, by the continual outpouring of his Spirit here, to render it a tower of strength and beauty to the people. The wants of this growing religious society and town demanded such a building; and I rejoice that you have seen fit so liberally to provide for these wants, and to offer up, as Solomon of old, the best edifice which you have, to God. This structure was commenced in harmony; in harmony it has been reared and brought to its completion. It it is a model of architectural design and of classic elegance; reflects credit on the builders, and the building committee; on the liberality of this parish, and the town of Natick.

We cherish unfeigned gratitude to God, that he has crowned our efforts to build for him an house with success; and while in memory of the past, we feel the tear of regret silently stealing, that our noble friend,* who laid the foundation of these walls and fondly hoped to see this day, has, in the very lustre of his manhood, been cut down and laid away from us, we, nevertheless, have reason to render hearty thanks to God that he has defended the laborers on this building from every accident, and has given the people, even the ladies of this town, "a mind to work" until its perfect close.

The edifice is completed, and is open to the public service of the Lord.

Do you desire, my friends and brethren, to behold his strength and beauty here? to have his glory, as of old, abide

* Mr. WILLIAM T. SHATTUCK, builder, died September 24, 1853.

continually in this sanctuary? to behold peace within his walls, and plenteousness within his palaces? Then abandon every sin, and cleave to Jesus. Take his cross, and daily follow him. Be honest and above-board in your dealings; in the very intents and purposes of your hearts. Be liberal in your benefactions; be charitable to those that differ from you in opinion; be students of this Bible; be fervent in spirit; be meek, be merciful, be Christ-like. Forgive and forget the differences of the past, and let your hearts be knit together in the bonds of Christian love; for out of love, as we have seen, comes everlasting strength and beauty.

Would you behold the outpouring of God's Spirit in this sanctuary? Then let your solemn vows be paid here, constant as the morning and the evening sacrifice; and when you come into this temple-gate, leave worldly schemes and worldly thoughts behind you; and, in profound humility and contrition of heart, bend reverently before the throne of your august Creator; for ("the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.") "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby;" and with the spirit as with the understanding, pour forth your lively songs of gratitude and praise. ("Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;") and then shall strength and beauty in abiding union shine in all your doctrines and your services; upon these sacred walls and in your very hearts and lives! Then shall this glorious temple be a tower of strength and beauty, mightier far than

> "High raised battlement, or labored mound,
> Thick wall or moated gate,"

to save you and your sons and daughters from what the wrath of man can do to you.

Amid that strength and beauty which the presence of the Lord imparts, may you, my friends and brethren, long find peace and comfort here in worshiping your God. Here may the poor be satisfied with bread; here may the mourner

meet with consolation; here may the sinner have the burden of his guilt removed, the saint his soul built up in righteousness. In the strength and beauty of the Lord, may this pulpit ever fearlessly proclaim those great doctrines of the cross by which our fathers lived and died, and to which our country owes her liberty and her glory; may this pulpit ever fearlessly proclaim salvation for the poor; deliverance for the captive; freedom and fraternity and equal rights for all! May it ever proclaim "Christ crucified" as the only and the certain remedy for sin; as the only means of human progress; as the only source of human strength and beauty; as the only door to heaven! For this wonderful transaction may it ever proclaim "glory unto God in the highest," and through it, ever publish "peace on earth, good will toward men!"

May the choir, in solemn strains of music, echo back this Bethlehemic song, and the congregation of the people shout aloud, AMEN!

In the strength and beauty of this sanctuary; in its petitions and thanksgivings; in its holy teachings; in its "psalms of honor sounding loud;" in its solemn sacraments and festivals, may your souls be more and more unfolded into strength and beauty, and made perfect for those glorious mansions which are established by the hand of God in strength, and crowned with an eternal splendor in the heavens.

HISTORICAL NOTE.

The first meeting-house, in the central part of Natick, was erected in the year 1799, on the same spot which our new edifice now occupies. It contained only fifty pews; and the cost of building it was about $2,500. In 1835, this church was sold and removed, and a larger and more expensive one erected in the place of it. This was dedicated in December, of the same year; the sermon on the occasion being preached by the Rev. E. D. Moore, the pastor of the church. Owing, however, to the rapid increase in the population of the town, this building was soon found to be too small for the accommodation of the people; and it was, therefore, deemed advisable, in 1853, to dispose of it, and to erect another, which should better meet the wants of the society.

Our present edifice was, therefore, begun in the summer of 1853, and completed and dedicated in November, 1854. It was built under the direction of a Building Committee, consisting of Edward Walcott and John W. Bacon, Esqrs., Messrs. Dexter Washburn, Leonard Winch and Dea. Willard A. Wight; and after a plan drawn by G. J. F. Bryant, Architect, Boston. It is well and substantially built, in the Gothic style of architecture, with turrets, and a spire rising to the height of about one hundred and seventy feet and surmounted by a foliated finial. In the basement of the church there is a large and commodious vestry, a lecture room, a committee room, &c., all conveniently arranged and furnished for the Sabbath school, the meetings of the church, the monthly concert, benevolent society, and other kindred purposes. The audience room above contains, with the galleries, one hundred and sixteen pews, made entirely of

black walnut, and capable of seating about eight hundred people. The decorations of this room are very chaste and beautiful. The windows are of stained glass; the galleries, the pendents, and the traceries above, are light and elegant; the painting is well executed, the pews are circular and very neatly finished; the pulpit and the organ correspond in style to the general design of the whole; and the carpeting and upholstery are in perfect keeping with the rest; so that the "tout ensemble," or the general effect of the whole, is very fine indeed.

The organ was manufactured by Mr. George Stevens, of Cambridge, and is of superior tone and workmanship.

The entire cost of the edifice and furniture, the land and bell excepted, was about $28,000, of which nearly $25,000 were realized from the sale of pews after the dedication.

The pews were appraised at prices ranging from $75 to $525.

The Order of Exercises at the Dedication was as follows:

1. Voluntary on the Organ.

2. Anthem, by the Choir. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord," &c.—Psalm cxxii.

3. Invocation, by the Rev. Martin Moore, of Boston.

4. Reading the Scriptures, by the Rev. Edmund Dowse, of Sherborn.

5. Hymn, read by the Rev. Daniel Wight, of Scituate.

O sacred place where God has fixed his seat,
Where saints to pay their vows devoutly meet;
What hallowed thoughts thy towering walls surround;
What holy scenes within thy walls are found.

'T is here creation's King proclaims his law;
'T is here his people bend with reverent awe;
'T is here is heard the cheering gospel's voice;
'T is here that men in mercies' smile rejoice.

Within this sacred house of prayer and praise
Devotion's songs the tribes of Zion raise;
'T is here that Hope points up to endless day,
Where Life in glory blooms without decay.

6. Introductory Prayer, by the Rev. H. Allen, of Wayland.

7. Hymn, read by the Rev. C. V. Spear, of Sudbury.

With one consent, let all the earth
To God their cheerful voices raise;
Glad homage pay, with awful mirth,
And sing before him songs of praise.

Convinced that he is God alone,
From whom both we and all proceed;
We, whom he chooses for his own,
The flock which he vouchsafes to feed.

Oh enter then his temple gate;
Thence to his courts devoutly press;
And still your grateful hymns repeat,
And still his name with praises bless.

For he's the Lord—supremely good;
His mercy is forever sure;
His truth, which always firmly stood,
To endless ages shall endure.

8. Sermon, from Psalm xcvi. 6, by the Rev. Elias Nason, Pastor of the Church.

9. Anthem. "Awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments."

10. Dedicatory Prayer, by Rev. William Barrows, of Grantville.

11. Hymn, read by the Rev. N. Beach, of Millbury.

O bow thine ear, Eternal One,
On thee our heart adoring calls;
To thee, the followers of thy Son
Have raised, and now devote these walls.

Here let thy holy-days be kept,
And be this place of worship given
Like that bright house where Jacob slept,
The house of God, the gate of Heaven.

Here be thy praise devoutly sung;
Here let thy spirit come to save
As when a mystic dove it hung
On wings of light o'er Jordan's wave.

12. Closing Prayer, by the Rev. B. G. Northrup, of Saxonville.

13. Anthem. "Build thou the walls of Jerusalem."

14. Benediction, by the Rev. E. D. Moore, of Natick.

15. Voluntary on the Organ.

The music, under the direction of Mr. Timothy Travis, Chorister of the church, was performed in excellent style, and added greatly to the interest of the occasion.